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INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1861
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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7120
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5097
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3254
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5054
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1333
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0591
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4164
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9460
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6761
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 1260
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3692
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000827

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: BASIL RAJAPAKSA DISCLOSES PLAN TO DECONGEST MANIK FARM

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JAMES R. MOORE. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Senior Advisor to the President Basil Rajapaksa told Charge and A/DCM that the GSL planned to move forward with significant IDP resettlement before the monsoon season begins in October. When pressed, Rajapaksa said as many as 100,000 would be released, including students, religious leaders, the elderly, and others. It remained unclear, however, how the GSL would deal with the looming catastrophe of the those remaining in the camps. In response to Charge's recent letter to the GSL noting that four de-mining partners receiving U.S. funding were not working to capacity, Rajapaksa claimed they had not finished the tasks assigned. END SUMMARY.

The Blame Game

¶2. (C) On August 21, Charge and A/DCM met with Senior Presidential Advisor, Member of Parliament, and President's brother Basil Rajapaksa to discuss Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) plans to deal with the potentially disastrous situation in the IDP camps at Manik Farm when monsoon rains arrive in early October. His initial response was to blame the UN for not installing the proper tents or toilets and claimed the UN had not reimbursed the GSL for its work in land clearing and road construction in Manik Farm. Mentioning A/S Blake's interview that same day with CNN, he stated that the GSL had not received one cent from the international community for IDPs, only in-kind materials and it was not fair to blame the GSL for the situation in the camps.

Claims to Have a Plan

¶3. (C) Rajapaksa said the solution to the problems in the IDP camps was to resettle the people. Two times he said, "we have a plan." Charge stated that it would be very helpful if the GSL could release a one-page plan, even an executive summary as there had not been adequate sharing of the GSL plans with the international community. Rajapaksa said that

the demining and resettlement plan would be presented to the Cabinet the week of August 25, and following that, he would release the plan.

Taking Issue with Embassy Over Demining

¶4. (C) Rajapaksa took issue with a recent letter from the A/DCM stating that the four mine-action partners recently funded by PM/WRA had excess demining capacity, countering that they had not completed their current taskings. A/DCM committed to providing precise information outlining the unutilized survey and demining capacity of the four partners. Rajapaksa raised again the GSL's urgent requirement for flail machines for demining. He stated that the GSL was airlifting five flail machines from the Czech Republic at a cost of USD 2 million. He also said that Australia through IOM was providing handheld equipment that would be used by the GSL's humanitarian demining unit. He asked for U.S. help with the purchase of demining equipment and Charge stated that we would convey this message.

GSL Plans to Decongest Manik Farm

¶5. (C) Rajapaksa detailed the status of registration of IDPs, noting that there were 145,011 registered and 105,000 with identification cards. He said that with the cards, the people would be able to move and to obtain rations when they were resettled. He stated that 1,036 orphans had been

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registered and that their disposition was subject to court order. Approximately 300 cases were still with the courts. The others would be released to orphanages in Vavuniya, Mannar, and an SOS village. The Social Services Ministry had registered elders numbering 16,423. As of August 19, of the elderly, 9,426 have been approved for discharge from the camps; 6,003 have left, and 1,318 were awaiting approval. As of August 19, there also had been 8,558 families unified. With the 2,520 IDPs resettled in Musali in July and the 4,158 released to Jaffna and the East on August 5, Rajapaksa stated that approximately 13,000 IDPs had been resettled. (NOTE: It was not clear that all came from Manik Farm. END NOTE.)

¶6. (C) Rajapaksa described other categories of persons who would be released. Hindu and Catholic priests would be released under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Catholic priests would be released to the Archbishop. The disabled would be released under the authority of the Ministry of Social Services. University aspirants who had been accepted would be handed over to the vice-chancellor under the auspices of the University Grants Commission. IDPs not originating from the Vanni area had been separated into those recommended for resettlement and those who were not by the security services and their names forwarded to the relevant Government Agent. He had made a proposal to the Security Council for clearance to advertise for host family releases. This would enable relatives of IDPs to apply for and accept responsibility for, IDPs after they had prepared and had an affidavit approved by the Government Agent and received a clean police report. Rajapaksa stated, when pressed, that their target was to have between 100,000-150,000 persons remaining in Manik Farm when the monsoons began. He stated that the people remaining would be the poorest ones and that no one would pay attention to them.

Comment

¶7. (C) Once again Rajapaksa seemed eager to convey the impression that the GSL was on top of the situation and now had in its hands the registration and other data needed for a resettlement plan. It remains clear, however, that the GSL is holding its plans very close to its chest and is not

engaging the UN or international donors in its plans. In addition, by tightly controlling the tasks released to the demining organizations while continuing to state that demining is key, brings into question what the GSL's real plans are and what the true rationale is for not releasing the IDPs. Post's assessment is that it is possible up to 100,000 IDPs will be released before the end of September but highly unlikely that the GSL will allow freedom of movement for those remaining. While the GSL and the UN will strive to improve the conditions for those remaining in Manik Farm, it is not clear that a humanitarian catastrophe will be averted by those actions.

MOORE